

CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
maintained by the
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
and supported by the
CALIFORNIA INTERAGENCY WILDLIFE TASK GROUP
Database Version 8.1 (2005)

B551 Island Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma insularis*
Family: Corvidae Order: Passeriformes Class: Aves

Written by: T. Kucera

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Resident on Santa Cruz Island in oak woodland and scrub habitats. Previously a sub-species of western scrub-jay (*A. californicus*) recently elevated to specific level (AOU 1995). Most habitat and life-history information based on knowledge of western scrub-jay.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Probably like western scrub-jay, which is omnivorous; mostly eats acorns, nuts, seeds, fruits, insects, and other invertebrates. Also eats small vertebrates, bird eggs and young. Gleans and picks food from ground, foliage, bark and wood. Hammers nuts open. Often caches nuts and other food in soil (Bent 1946).

Cover: Generally prefers trees and shrubs in arid woodlands and shrublands; also frequents riparian woodlands.

Reproduction: Nest of western scrub-jay is a cup of twigs and grasses lined with rootlets and other plant fibers; built by both sexes (Harrison 1978). Nest usually placed in dense foliage in a tree or shrub 0.9 to 9 m (3-30 ft) high, often near water (Airola 1980).

Water: Williams and Koenig (1980) reported western scrub-jays making regular drinking visits to a spring in oak woodland in coastal California. Drinking water probably essential.

Pattern: Prefers open woodlands and shrublands, especially with oaks.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Yearlong, resident on Santa Cruz Island.

Home Range: For western scrub-jay, same size as territory (Airola 1980). Erickson (1937) reported density of 1 pair per 1.6 to 4 ha (4-10 ac.).

Territory: Verbeek (1973) reported territory of western scrub-jay "about" 3 ha (7.5 ac) in coastal California, and defended yearlong. Hardy (1961) reported a single territory/home range of 2.1 ha (5.3 ac) in New Mexico.

Reproduction: Western scrub-jay breeds from early March to mid-August. Monogamous; Lays 2-6 eggs, usually 2-3; clutch smaller in arid areas. Incubation 15-18 days, by female only. Male feeds female during incubation. Altricial young

tended by both parents (Harrison 1978). Young leave nest at 18-23 days (Bent 1946, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Niche: Like western scrub-jay, occasionally preyed upon by hawks, small mammals, and other corvids. Closely associated with oaks and acorns. Steals acorn woodpecker caches.

REFERENCES

- American Ornithologists Union. 1995. Fortieth supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds. *Auk* 112:819-830.
- Airola, D. A., ed. 1980. California wildlife habitat relationships program: Northeast Interior Zone. Vol III. Birds. U.S. Dep. Agric., For. Serv., Lassen Natl. For., Susanville. 590pp.
- Bent, A. C. 1946. Life histories of North American jays, crows, and titmice. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 191. 495pp.
- Ehrlich, P. R., D. S. Dobkin, and D. Wheye. 1988. The birder's handbook. Simon and Schuster, New York. 785pp.
- Erickson, M. M. 1937. A jay shoot in California. *Condor* 39:111-115.
- Garrett, K., and J. Dunn. 1981. Birds of southern California. Los Angeles Audubon Soc. 408pp.
- Hardy, J. W. 1961. Studies in behavior and phylogeny of certain new world jays (Garrulinae). *Univ. Kans. Sci. Bull.* 42:13-149.
- Harrison, C. 1978. A field guide to the nests, eggs and nestlings of north American birds. W. Collins Sons and Co., Cleveland, OH. 416pp.
- McCaskie, G., P. De Benedictis, R. Erickson, and J. Morlan. 1979. Birds of northern California, an annotated field list. 2nd ed. Golden Gate Audubon Soc., Berkeley. 84pp.
- Pitelka, F. A. 1951. Speciation and ecological distribution in American jays in the Genus *Aphelocoma*. *Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool.* 50:195-464.
- Small, A. 1994. California birds: their status and distribution. Ibis Publishing Co., Vista, CA.
- Verbeek, N. A. M. 1973. The exploitation system of the yellow-billed magpie. *Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool.* 99:1-58.
- Williams, P. L., and W. D. Koenig. 1980. Water dependence of birds in a temperate oak woodland. *Auk* 97:339-350.